Modernism

- Traditional plot is sometimes abandoned
- Themes are implied, rather than stated directly
- Characters are morally ambiguous
- Conclusions are often left open-ended
- All of this forces readers to come to their own interpretive understanding of a book

The Imagists

- Poetry was ahead of fiction in finding its Modernist footing
- Imagism (1909-1917) was a reaction against the sentimental and romantic poetry of the previous century
  - They preferred a hard, clear voice, concrete images, common vernacular, and unrestricted verse
  - Their models came from Greek and Roman classics, Chinese and Japanese poetry, and the free verse of French poets
- Imagism steered poetry away from its previous subjectivity and toward a more objective perspective

Ezra Pound—Make it new!

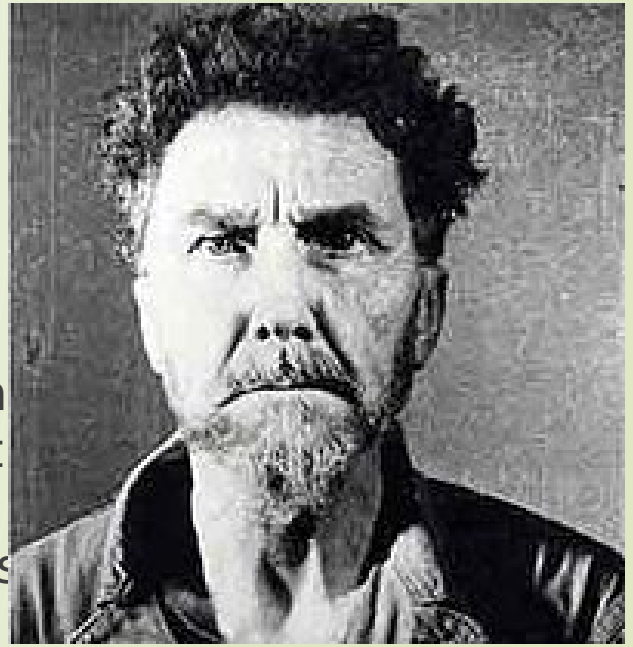
Pound's Rules

① It is better to present one image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous words.

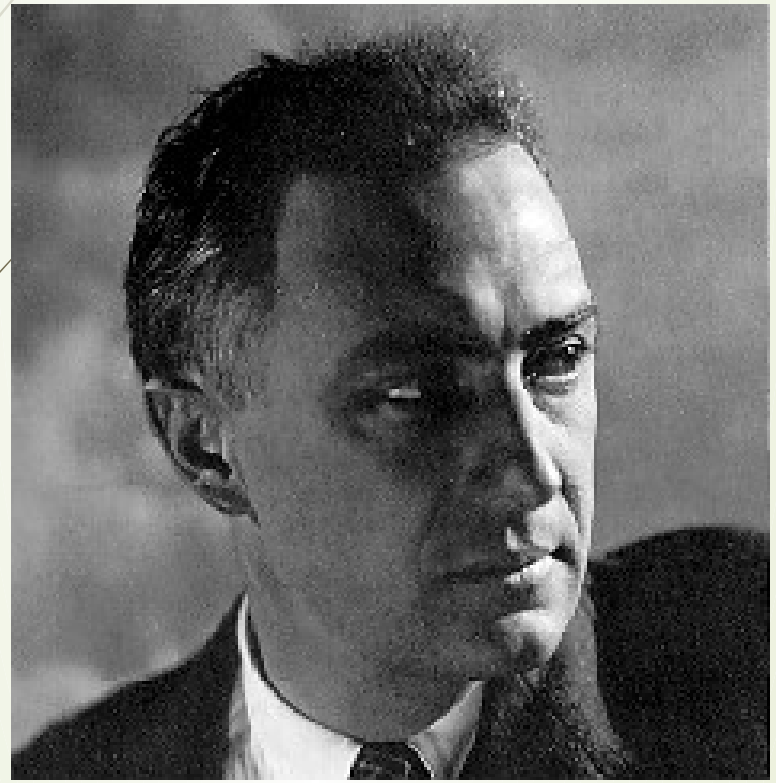
② Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something.

③ Don't use such an expression as 'dim lands of peace.' It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. The natural object is always the adequate symbol.

④ Be influenced by as many great artists as you can, but acknowledge the debt outright, or try to conceal it.



William Carlos Williams



- No ideas but things
- Beauty and meaning in the “everyday”
- Rhythm—the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables, line breaks, stanza breaks—becomes the essence of the poetic process

e. e. cummings

- Total experimentation
- Style becomes the driving force behind poetry, with the visual shape or structure of a poem conveying or reinforcing its meaning
  - !Punctuation!
  - CaPiTaLiZaTioN
  - Typography
  - Letters and Lines
  - Margins and S p a c e s
- One critic: “The poems are made to misbeha
- “anyone lived in a pretty how town” (1940)

Robert Frost

- A traditionalist among the rebels
- Traditional verse forms and conversational language
- Vivid narratives and picturesque portraits of America
  - Sometimes accused of Rockwellian nostalgia
- Popular among the critics and the public
  - Four Pulitzer Prizes
  - JFK’s inauguration
- “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

Modern Poetry Vocabulary

apparition

- The act of appearing or becoming invisible

insidious

- Deceitful; secretly treacherous

wanton

- Senseless; unjustified

cunning

- Crafty; sly

palpable

- Able to be touched or felt

suffice

- To be enough

syntax

- An orderly or systematic arrangement, as in a sentence

marrow

- The soft tissue that fills the cavities of most bones

diverse

- various

scorned

- Refused or rejected as wrong or disgraceful

unsheathed

- Removed from its case

Literary Terms

flashback

- A section of a story that disrupts the chronological narrative to tell about an event from the past, like a memory or a story told

Free verse

- Poetry that lacks rhyme and pattern

imagery

- Descriptive language that creates word pictures for the reader

Objectivism

- An offshoot of Modernism, the objectivists treated each poem as an object, and emphasized sincerity, intelligence, and the poet's ability to look clearly at the world

Imagism

- The Imagist poets wrote short poems that used ordinary language and free verse.

Modernism

- A literary movement where the authors sought to reflect Modern life by changing the form and structure of literature

Stream-of-consciousness

- The natural flow of a person’s thoughts

Symbolism

- A literary movement that used clusters of symbols to represent a larger meaning

stanza

- A group of lines in a poem that are considered a unit